

**AGENDA ITEM IVA**  
**PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM**  
**NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**B. S. IN ADDICTION STUDIES**

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**BACKGROUND**

In Fall 2002, two events stimulated the creation of the proposed program.

First, the Louisiana Office for Addictive Disorders designated Northwestern State University (NWSU) as the state's Addiction Technology Transfer Center Coordinating Center, thereby making Louisiana a participant in a federal initiative to create a national network of regional educational centers aimed at improving research and treatment by disseminating state-of-the-art research and best practices in addiction studies. The regional network of which Louisiana is now a part is the Gulf Coast Addiction Technology Transfer Center (GCATTC).

Second, the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospital's Office of Addictive Disorders (the leading employer of substance abuse counselors in the state) indicated a dire need for additional training opportunities in the state by predicting significant shortages in substance abuse counselors. In Louisiana, the only other public baccalaureate program in this subject area is a B.S. in Substance Abuse at Southern University at New Orleans.

In April 2003, the Board of Regents approved the Letter of Intent from NWSU to develop a program in addiction studies, stipulating that a full proposal should clarify the extent to which the proposed program would unnecessarily duplicate the program at SUNO.

To assist in evaluating the proposal, the staff engaged the consulting services of Dr. Richard Spence, Director of Social Work Research at the University of Texas - Austin. Dr. Spence currently directs the Gulf Coast Addiction Technology Transfer Center. His evaluative report was sent to Northwestern State on November 3, 2003. The University's response was received on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

**STAFF SUMMARY**

The proposed program (122 credit hours) is designed to prepare students for a range of employment positions in the field of addiction counseling. After general education coursework and taking the university core (50 hours), students take 30 hours of coursework in psychology, 30 credit hours of new coursework in addiction studies, and 12 hours of free electives. Upon graduation, students will be qualified to sit for the certification exam offered by the Louisiana State Board of Certification for Substance Abuse Counselors. The staff notes also that the program will be offered online.

## **STRENGTHS OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM, AS IDENTIFIED BY THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

### **THE CURRICULUM IS EXCELLENT**

The proposed ten courses [in addiction studies proper] offer an excellent array of educational experiences appropriate to the task of preparing students for employment in the substance abuse counseling field.

The course offerings are strongly in sync with current issues in the field and with anticipated future movement in terms of funding and program emphases. Screening and Assessment, Special Populations, and Co-occurring Disorders are examples of issues of topics of timely emphasis and preparation for increasing future service demands. The requirements are well-suited to the program goals, and they are indicative of a program of high quality.

### **PROSPECTS FOR PROGRAM GROWTH ARE EXCELLENT**

The history of the program, including its close coordination with the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, and its designation as an Addiction Technology Transfer Center give good evidence of its viability and potential for growth.

Additional confidence in projected enrollments and the pattern of an increasing rate of enrollments in future years is enhanced by analysis of enrollment patterns subsequent to initiation of a new B.S. in Criminal Justice program in 1997. The Criminal Justice program saw rapid and sustained enrollment increases. It is reasonable to expect that the new B.S. in Addiction Studies would also experience a similar growth pattern.

### **FACULTY ARE WELL-QUALIFIED**

All the faculty are well-qualified in the field of substance abuse... In addition, two of the faculty are well-known in the field... and are known nationally for their work in addictions education. [One faculty in particular] has led addiction technology transfer efforts in Texas, has played a key role in establishing new educational consortia in Texas and Louisiana, and has served on national committees for practice improvement in addictions and participated in the development of national standards for addictions education.

### **PROSPECTS FOR EXTERNAL SUPPORT ARE GOOD**

Financial support from the federal government through the GCATTC, and through the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, is expected to continue and possibly expand in future years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT, WITH RESPONSES FROM NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY**

### **COURSE CONTENT SHOULD BE REFINED**

#### **Consultant report:**

There are several important content areas that may be covered by these courses, but it was unclear from the brief course descriptions whether these areas were included...

#### **University response:**

[Staff note: The University clarified the extent of content area inclusion in course syllabi and added recommended course content where appropriate.]

### **INTERNSHIP OR PRACTICUM POSSIBILITIES SHOULD BE EXPLORED**

#### **Consultant report:**

It would further enhance the program portfolio to include an internship or practicum offering...

#### **University response:**

We recognize the importance of having an experiential component in the program and have included skills-based activities in the upper-level courses. These activities [listed in the response] will be supervised and evaluated by faculty. In the future, as the program develops and the number of students increases, we hope to utilize broad-based community resources as they become available to establish practicum sites for the students.

### **PLANS FOR ENHANCING LIBRARY AND OTHER RESOURCES ARE MINIMALLY ADEQUATE**

#### **Consultant report:**

[The plan for library enhancement] is minimally adequate, but should be increased in future years of the program. [...] Although the facilities appear adequate for the initial semesters of the program, potential growth of the program may require expanded space.

#### **University response:**

The University is committed to adding library resources as the program develops and the needs are better identified... The University is committed to making adequate space available to accommodate program expansion.

## **FACULTY WORKLOAD IS EXCESSIVE**

### **Consultant report:**

One area of concern is the standard workload of five courses each semester for all faculty. This excessive workload will preclude adequate research, community and professional service, and other leadership activities that characterize a quality program.

### **University response:**

Although the 15 semester hour workload is standard, the university recognizes that it is a large load, and efforts will be made to ensure that there is time for research and other professional activities. The university recently created a new, tenure-track assistant professor position, which will be filled in the spring. The university has also committed to adding an instructor in the third year to accommodate projected enrollment increases. The university is also committed to adding faculty as the number of participants increases. In addition, faculty with graduate faculty status are granted a course release. Additional course release time may be solicited by faculty to accommodate research or service projects.

The University also provides resources for departments to assist with this workload. First, faculty members are provided graduate assistants... Second, other department faculty will share in the responsibility of university and departmental services... Third, the department secretary provides administrative support... Therefore, with this support, the faculty should be able to balance the course load with the other required activities.

## **STAFF ANALYSIS**

The proposed program addresses state employment needs in this area very effectively. Faculty are well-qualified, and the University is evidently committed to supporting the program by assigning it more faculty positions and soliciting more information about its specific resource needs. Linkages with other regional institutions through the GCATTC (see above) have been established, which increases the likelihood of additional, external sources of support.

Given the distance between the University and SUNO, as well as regional and state needs for additional practitioners of addiction counseling, the staff does not consider the proposed program unnecessarily duplicative of the program in substance abuse counseling at SUNO.

The staff finally observes that the University has responded appropriately to most of the recommendations of the external consultant. The issue of faculty workload remains a concern, particularly in light of three things: 1) the likely, rapid increase in enrollment, 2) the program's being offered online via the internet (necessitating the time-consuming development of on-line courses), and 3) the program's being part of an Addiction Technology Transfer Center (with participation's associated administrative responsibilities).

Accordingly, the staff believes it prudent to require the University to submit an implementation report in August 2005 which demonstrates an appropriate faculty workload distribution. In addition, the implementation report should provide evidence, given the University's designation as an ATTC, of coordination with associate-, baccalaureate, and master-level substance abuse counseling programs at public universities in the state.

#### ***STAFF RECOMMENDATION***

***The staff recommends that the Academic And Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the proposed Bachelor of Science in Addiction Studies program (CIP 51.1501) at Northwestern State University, effective immediately, with the stipulation that the University shall submit a report to the Commissioner of Higher Education on August 1, 2005, which documents appropriate faculty workload distribution and coordination with other public degree programs in substance abuse counseling.***